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# INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE



D. FRASER, F.R.S.



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# INSPIRATION.





THE  
INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE:

WHAT IT INCLUDES,  
AND WHAT AUTHORITY IT CONFERS.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE following pages have been written with a special reference to Sunday School Teachers, and the Young in Christian families and congregations. At the same time, it is hoped that the views stated will commend themselves to all thoughtful and inquiring minds, and help to remove some of the difficulties which, without just reason, have been connected with the subject.

It has been my object to present, in a simple and popular form, the substance of the Lectures on Inspiration which have been delivered to the students

of Airedale College. In order to give a clear and succinct view of the question, critical examinations of works on Inspiration have been omitted, except where reference to the opinions of other writers has directly aided the elucidation of the subject.

It will cause me no surprise to find the views which I have expressed represented as old-fashioned, and too dogmatic—charges which not unfrequently imply the wider vision and higher intellectual stand-point of the critic. It is not, however, a mark of wisdom to think less of any truth because the hoariness of age gathers round it.

Wise and practical men will admit facts, and will test them for what they claim to be, and to teach. The exist-

ence of the Bible in the world is a fact. It claims to be the Word of God, and, as such, demands our faith and obedience. Are the claims it puts forth true and just? Surely this is a question which equally concerns every one. To that question I have endeavoured to give a fair and candid answer.

It may seem to some that, as Miracles are adduced as the External Evidence of the Divine commission of the Inspired Writers, a consideration of "Law and Miracle" might have appropriately preceded that of Inspiration. This omission may perhaps be supplied on some future occasion.

*Airedale College,*

*March, 1874.*



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# INSPIRATION.

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## I.

### MAN NEEDS A REVELATION OF THE DIVINE WILL.

In considering the question of Inspiration, it is assumed that there is a God, and that He can, if it seem good to Him, grant a special and direct Revelation of His will to His intelligent creatures, and connect with such a Revelation conclusive evidence of its divine origin.

All who acknowledge the existence of a Great Creator of the universe will admit

that by the manifestation of His divine perfections in Creation and Providence He has given to men a Revelation of Himself.

The Author of Nature speaks to us in His works and in His ways; does He address us in no other voice more distinct, more full, more decisive? Nature's open page is ever before us; is there no other page on which to cast the eye for direction and comfort in seasons of difficulty and distress? The teaching of Nature is not undervalued; but is there no other teaching, and need we no other? Is there not sometimes in Nature's lessons so much that is indefinite and mysterious, that we cannot help feeling that, to the full understanding of the whole truth, some further instruction is required? Without such aid, how shall we harmonize occurrences

in Nature from which inferences may be drawn apparently the opposites of each other ?

At one time, for instance, we see the gentle shower refreshing the thirsty ground, and making the face of Nature instinct with new life and beauty ; at another, we mark the descending torrents flooding the streams and rivers, and carrying widespread desolation in their track. One while, we feel the soft zephyr lending a balmy freshness to the warmth of summer ; at another, we listen to the roar of the hurricane, as it rushes down the mountain's side, with ruin in its path, or sweeps across the ocean, strewing it with wrecks, and consigning many a mariner to a watery grave. Looking at events in the material creation so very different in their conse-

quences, we cannot but ask, "What does Nature really teach?" In Nature we see God, as it were, at a distance from us, working by general laws, the operation of which sometimes bears heavily upon individuals. We want to get near to Him; to hear His voice addressed to us in love, as a Father's voice, that we may rest in Him.

These cravings of our being can only be met, and the difficulties referred to explained, by a more full and direct revelation of the principles and purposes of the divine government from the Author of Nature. For just in proportion as man realizes his dependence, for present well-being and future happiness, upon a Being who is infinite and supreme, and his incapacity, of himself, to attain to a satisfac-

tory knowledge of the attributes and government of that Being, will he be conscious of his need of special instruction from heaven.

The existence of this deep-felt conviction of the soul is one of the truths taught us by the religious systems of the ancients. They recognized a want which they endeavoured to supply by their oracles and dreams and omens. Their mysteries, too, professed to impart information which neither the light of Nature nor of Reason could furnish. And yet nothing more than a brief glance at the amount of religious knowledge possessed in the countries where ancient heathenism prevailed is required to demonstrate its utter inability to accomplish the task which it had set itself. We may take the Divine Unity as an illustration. In the present day

the oneness of the Godhead is generally acknowledged as a truth proclaimed by the works and laws of Nature; yet where among the ancients—with the one exception of the Jews—shall we find a nation that held the doctrine of the Divine Unity as an article of the popular faith?

The Philosophy as well as the religious systems of the ancients failed to secure such a result. Wisdom was cultivated at the court of Babylon, but it did not accomplish this: civilization and science, in very early times, found a home in the great Nile-valley, but they were inadequate to effect this: philosophy was held in high repute in Greece, and called forth many thoughts in thoughtful minds, but it did not achieve this. The wisdom of sages, and the learning of the Schools, whatever

they might do for individuals, were powerless so far as the bursting of the bonds of superstition and the enlightening of communities in regard to the nature and laws of the Infinite and Omnipotent One were concerned.

In the inner depths of man's being there still dwelt unsatisfied the craving after a knowledge more complete, more convincing, and clothed with a higher authority than philosophy could supply.

The very successes which crowned the investigations of philosophers in other departments of knowledge present in more striking contrast this manifest need of fuller information respecting Deity Himself. Still more clearly does the necessity for divine illumination appear when we look at man as capable of appreciating moral dis-

tinctions, and as laid under moral responsibility. This consciousness of the distinction between right and wrong cannot be resolved into a matter of accident or education, but must be regarded as a necessary result of man's moral nature. The existence of such a distinction in the human mind—a distinction, the recognition of which is essential to the very existence of society,—points to a principle or law external to man, and superior to him. Law, again, implies a Lawgiver, since it is absurd to regard Law as a mere abstraction, unconnected with an intelligent and, in the case of universal law, an all-powerful Being. Now, if there be a Lawgiver and a law, and if we have reason to believe that His law shall be enforced, it is not a thing to be desired merely, but a thing indispen-



sable to our safety, as moral agents, that we be acquainted with the will of our Lawgiver and Judge.

We are confirmed in this conclusion when, from theoretical considerations, we turn to facts.

The moral condition of the world, looked at in the Past and in the Present, furnishes another illustration of the need which exists for a special Revelation of the Divine Will. The state of the human family, viewed in regard to man's moral obligations and social relationships, presents a problem of which Nature, including man's own reason, has never supplied an adequate solution. In every age, the mind which looked inward on its moral feelings, and outward on its moral actions, has been conscious of the perplexity to which the

heathen poet confessed, when he said,  
“I approve the better things; the worse  
I follow.”

Why the soul of man should have such glimpses of the beautiful and the good as it sometimes enjoys, and, at the same time, should so decidedly fail to reach its own ideal; why the moral condition of society in general should present such sins and such sorrows, such deeds of crime and cruelty and blood as history records; or why, while in the world of matter the reign of law is universal, in the higher world of moral beings there should be found such flagrant violations of law, working results the most disastrous, philosophy has never satisfactorily explained.

Thus it follows that the deeds of wickedness which disfigure the records of all lands,

on the one hand, and all that the best and greatest minds, in their highest and holiest aspirations, have longed after, on the other, tell us, as with trumpet-tongue, that, in regard to his present position and future destiny, man needs more of enlightenment, more of certainty, more of hope and motive influence, than ever can be gathered from the most prolonged and patient study of Nature's works.

## II.

### THE BIBLE CLAIMS TO BE A REVELATION FROM GOD TO MAN.

Man needs moral and spiritual instruction more full, authoritative, and soul-satisfying than Nature and Reason furnish ; is there such instruction to be found? The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments profess to meet the spiritual want of which men are conscious. They speak in the name, and as invested with the authority of the God of heaven. Again and again do we find the writers of the Old Testament representing themselves as specially commissioned by Jehovah to reveal His will

to men, and claiming for the truths they teach His divine sanction.

We see them prefacing their message with such words as "Thus saith the Lord," "The Lord said," "The word of the Lord came," "This is the word of the Lord," "That the word of the Lord from the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled," &c., &c. When we refer to the New Testament, we find the Lord Jesus Christ promising to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples, to bring His teaching to their remembrance, and to lead them into all truth. We read how, on the day of Pentecost, the emblems of the Spirit's presence rested on the heads of the disciples; and afterwards we see them affixing the seal of heaven's authority to what they taught and wrote.

We naturally ask, "What does all this amount to? Have we in these writings true and authoritative communications from heaven? Are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments properly designated the Word of God?"

The Bible does not advance its claim to universal faith and obedience without adducing evidence in support of that claim. It makes its appeal to the intelligence of men, and declares its demands to be in all respects in consonance with reason.

The miracles wrought by our Lord and His apostles stand first in the order of Christian Evidences. The existence of God being acknowledged, it does not admit of question that He can, if He please, both grant a Revelation of His will, and accompany it with unmistakable tokens of His

divine sanction. Miracles, duly attested, are the indubitable marks of the presence and authority of Heaven's King. To say, in opposition to this, that miracles, being opposed to law, are impossible, and can be substantiated by no amount of evidence, is to display a manifest ignorance of what constitutes law, when viewed in reference to the Divine Being. Law, looked at in regard to God, is the manifestation of His infinite perfections—the unfolding to the view of His creatures of His own divine excellence. Law, in regard to the creature, is the mode in which Deity has been pleased to act, and in which He has revealed Himself. In other words, Law is simply the mode of the Divine procedure perceived and recognized by us. It is altogether unphilosophical, not to say un-

scriptural, to speak of God as conditioned by law, and to reason as if the condition were *without God*, and not the *evolution* or manifestation of His own infinite perfections. In displaying these perfections to His intelligent creation, the Deity shows us that He takes cognizance of man's moral nature, and makes provision for his spiritual as well as for his temporal wants.

Miracles are supernatural facts, that is, facts out of the usual course of the Divine procedure, designed to attest the presence and power of the Author of Nature.

Miracles, as *facts of history*, are, like other facts, authenticated by evidence. When so authenticated, they constitute undeniable proof of the Divine sanction and approval. Mr. Lecky, indeed, tells us that "It is the fundamental error of most



writers on miracles, that they confine their attention to two points—the possibility of the fact, and the nature of the evidence. There is,” he adds, “a third element, which, in these questions, is of capital importance—the predisposition of men in certain stages of society towards the miraculous, which is so strong that miraculous stories are then invariably circulated and credited, and which makes an amount of evidence that would be quite sufficient to establish a natural fact, be altogether inadequate to establish a supernatural one.” —*History of European Morals*, vol. i., p. 384. As Mr. Lecky informs us, in the page preceding this quotation, that what he has written does not “at all disprove the possibility of Divine interference with the order even of physical nature,” it

is evident that he himself admits the *first point*—the possibility of the fact. What he presents as a third element of capital importance in the consideration of these questions, and which he thinks has been overlooked, amounts in substance to nothing more than this,—that as men in certain conditions of society seem predisposed to accept miraculous stories without a thorough inquiry into the reported facts, we are morally bound to see to it that the evidence is satisfactory and conclusive before we recognise as true any reported miracle.

What is this, after all, but stating a fact with which every reader of history is familiar, and laying down a rule of caution to which no candid writer on miracles would take exception.

The third element, represented as so important, is really included under the *second point*—the nature of the evidence. We need scarcely add that Mr. Lecky is altogether in error, when he speaks of the important consideration to which he refers as something overlooked; on the contrary, it constitutes one of the grounds on which Protestant writers reject alike the prodigies recorded by heathen historians, and the reported miracles, ancient and modern, of the Roman Catholic Church.\*

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\* It is somewhat remarkable that, while Mr. Lecky challenges a mode of argument, the reasonableness of which does not admit of doubt, he should express his approval of what is manifestly a weak point in Mr. Mozeley's *Bampton Lectures*—that in which the Lecturer fails to discriminate with sufficient accuracy between a *miracle* and a *special providence*; an ambiguity which Professor Tyndall, in his *Fragments of Science for Unscientific People*, deals with rather sarcastically.

We accordingly find our Lord appealing to the wonderful works which He performed as proof of His divine mission, and of the supreme importance of the truths which He taught. Speaking of the Jews, He says, "If I had not done among them the works that none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

So also Nicodemus reasoned, and rightly reasoned, when he said, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do the miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." In like manner, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, after declaring that God spake to the Jews in time past by the prophets, and to us in these last days by

His Son, proceeds to claim the same divine sanction for the teaching of the Apostles of our Lord. "How," he asks, "shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first was spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?"

The *moral grandeur* of the truths revealed in the Bible, viewed in connection with their manifest adaptation to man's spiritual necessities, constitutes an additional argument in support of their divine origin. We find this argument illustrated and confirmed when we look at the influence which these truths have exercised

on individuals and nations for more than eighteen centuries; an influence which, amid all the intellectual and material progress of the present age, they still continue to exert on large communities of Christian men.

The External and Internal Evidences of the divine origin of the Bible ought never to be separated; they are collateral branches of evidence, and are mutually corroborative. The truths of Scripture are not, as some have represented them, inferences drawn from the miraculous facts recorded there, but co-ordinate with those facts.

The miracles impart a divine sanction to the truths; the supreme importance of the truths justifies and explains the working of the miracles; and the moral results present us with that *argument from*

*power*, to which, in matters temporal, the world in general lends so ready and submissive an ear.

Stated in brief, our argument is this:—the miracles wrought by the Apostles of our Lord furnish unquestionable evidence of their divine commission, and, consequently, of the veracity of the revelation of the divine will made to us through them; the truths which they promulgated with the divine sanction are such, in grandeur and importance, as justify, to our reason, the special interposition of Heaven in attesting their divine origin and authority; while the influence exerted by these truths on the hearts and lives of believers, and through them on the world at large, substantiates the claim of the Bible to be the Word of God.

To these arguments, we would add that derived from the life of the great Founder of Christianity ;—the life which stands out alone in the records of humanity, in its unapproachable grandeur of truth, and holiness, and love.




### III.

#### THE HISTORY OF REVELATION AS GIVEN IN THE BIBLE.

We have seen that the Bible claims to be a Revelation of God's will to man, and we have briefly noticed the principal arguments adduced in support of that claim. The point which we have next to consider is, "How has this Revelation of the divine will been communicated to men?" As the terms Revelation and Inspiration are variously explained by different writers, it is necessary to state here that by Revelation we understand all to which God has given, by His Spirit, the attestation of

truthfulness. According to this view of the question, the whole Bible is a Revelation from God. Though it mentions many historical events which might have been known without supernatural intervention, yet these historical narrations differ from all others of the same kind in one marked particular—they have the seal of Heaven, testifying to the fact that they are faithfully recorded. This speciality in the relation of well-known events seems to have been overlooked by those writers who speak of there being a Revelation in the Bible,—restricting the word Revelation to truth which could not be known unless supernaturally communicated. By Inspiration, again, we understand the divine influence which rested upon those who were chosen, and specially qualified



by the Holy Spirit to convey to us a knowledge of the Divine Will. The writers of the Bible were thus inspired by the Holy Ghost, and because of their inspiration, the Bible, which they were instructed to write, is a Revelation from God to man. So, we think, the Apostle Paul viewed the Old Testament record when he said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

The next point that calls for examination is "How was this Revelation given?"

We learn from the Scriptures that God's will was made known to man, not in one uniform manner, but in various ways. In many instances no information is vouchsafed to us as to the mode in which the

Divine Will was revealed. It is plain from the Bible narrative that when in Paradise, and in his state of innocence, Adam was not left to the teachings of nature merely. Even there a law, or rule of conduct, was prescribed. God, probably appearing in human form, made known to our first parents the law of obedience and life.

That was the *First Revelation* of the Divine Will to our race.


The brief account given in the third chapter of Genesis lends countenance to the belief, that the Divine Being appeared in a similar manner to Adam after his disobedience. On these occasions, as also in passing sentence upon Cain, after the murder of his brother, we gather from the narrative that God spake in audible, human

words. Again, the Apostle Jude tells us that Enoch prophesied of the coming of the Lord, and of the punishment which he should inflict upon the scoffers and the impenitent, but gives us no information as to the mode in which the divine revelation was imparted.

Scripture is equally silent respecting the way in which Noah was warned of God to prepare an ark to the saving of his house. We learn from Scripture history that immediately before the destruction of Sodom, God appeared in human form to Abraham, and that afterwards He manifested Himself in a similar manner to Jacob and Joshua, and probably also to Manoah. On these occasions the Divine Will was conveyed to men in audible words. In the twentieth chapter of Genesis, we read

that God came to Abimelech in a *dream* by night. The Scriptures also tell us of the dreams of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, and of the wonderful visions of Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, &c.

In the third chapter of Exodus, we read that the Angel of the Lord appeared unto Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and that when Moses turned aside to see why the bush was not burned, "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." Again, when Elijah, in the wilderness, stood upon the mount before the Lord, there passed by, in succession, a strong wind, and an earthquake, and a fire, and after the fire a still, small voice. In these instances, also, the Divine Will was communicated in audible words. From the account given in the thirty-first




chapter of Exodus, it appears that the ten commandments were "written with the finger of God" on two tables of stone; and, from the twentieth chapter of the same book, we learn that, from Mount Sinai, they were proclaimed by God in audible words to the Children of Israel.

In the first chapter of Jeremiah, we read, "The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin, to whom the *word* of the Lord came, &c. So, also, in the first chapter of Zechariah, we read, "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying," &c. Sometimes it would seem as

if the events foretold by the prophet were portrayed to him in an apocalyptic vision of the future. Thus Scripture tells us of "The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos;" of "The vision of Obadiah;" of "The burden which Habakkuk, the prophet, did see," &c. We have more detailed accounts of the visions of Ezekiel and Daniel. In some of these cases, it seems probable that audible words were heard by the prophet; in many of them no explanation is given of the mode in which the Divine Will was revealed.

It may be proper to remark here, that a recognition of the Inspiration of the Bible, and of its completeness as the Rule of Faith and Practice to men, does not necessitate the belief that Inspiration—that is, God's special and miraculous





teaching—was confined absolutely to the Jewish nation, and the pious men who lived prior to Abraham. There is no conclusive evidence to show that Job, for instance, was connected with the Jewish people. Nor is it probable that the Magi who saw the star which announced the birth of the Messiah—and who must have been instructed by special revelation as to the purport of that sign—sprang from the stock of ancient Israel, unless we adopt the conjecture that they may have been descended from the ten captive tribes.

Balaam too, though a selfish and wicked man, was for a time the subject of divine impulse, and under it was constrained to utter predictions the very reverse of what he himself purposed and desired. To the same class of involuntary

predictions, though in this instance uttered by a Jew, must also be assigned the words spoken by Caiaphas, the high-priest, to the Council of the chief-priests and Pharisees, respecting our Lord—that it was expedient “That one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” The Evangelist adds, “This spake he not of himself, but being high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation,” &c.

The modes in which the Divine Will was revealed to man may be classified thus:—

*First.*—Instances in which God appeared in a visible form, and revealed His Will in words uttered by a human voice.

*Second.*—When the Divine Will was made known in audible words, without any visible manifestation.

*Third.*—By supernatural writing, as in the two tables of the law, and the writing on the wall of Belshazzar's palace.

*Fourth.*—By dreams and visions.

*Fifth.*—By an influence exerted on the mind of the inspired individual, in a way which is not described, but which convinced him of the divine origin of the message, and caused him to claim for it divine authority.

We also learn from Scripture that, under the Jewish economy, direction from God was sought on special emergencies by consulting the *Ephod*, or, as it is sometimes designated, the *Urim* and *Thummim*; but no information is given us as to the manner in which the divine response was communicated on those occasions.

#### IV.

WHAT INSPIRATION INCLUDES, AND ON  
WHAT GROUND AN AUTHORITY, EQUAL  
TO THAT OF VERBAL INSPIRATION,  
MAY BE CLAIMED FOR THE BIBLE.

On few subjects has there existed greater diversity of opinion than on this. Some have confounded Inspiration with *Genius*. They would have us believe that Moses or Isaiah was inspired, just as Demosthenes, or Shakespeare, or Milton, or Reubens, or Raffaele was inspired. That genius is God's special gift to a limited number of individuals, few will be disposed to question. Cicero has told us


that "*the poet is born, not made.*" His faculty or power may be cultivated, but not acquired, by education. The same may be said of painting and of music as of the gift of poetry, and, indeed, of any special taste and aptitude for the study of particular departments of knowledge, when developed in individuals to an extraordinary degree.

The Inspiration which, in popular speech, we ascribe to highly-endowed men ranks under the ordinary procedure of God's providential government. The conferring of the gifts of genius is as much a law of that government as the conferring of extraordinary physical strength or surpassing beauty.

The Inspiration of Scripture, on the contrary, belongs to the economy of grace, and contemplates a special moral


object,—the enlightening of men, and bringing them under the influence of moral truth, through the revelation of the Divine Will.

In the treatment of this subject not a little indefiniteness, both of thought and expression, has arisen from regarding the degree of inspired authority as to a certain extent determined by the *mode* in which the truth has been revealed. The mode of communication, we have seen, has varied much; it would be a most erroneous inference to suppose that the importance or value of the truth revealed has varied in the same ratio. The attempt to distinguish between different kinds of Inspiration, based upon a classification of the different modes in which the Divine afflatus rested on the inspired writers, has



tended in no small degree to countenance this mistaken notion. Those who treat the subject in this manner are naturally led to look at the Inspired Record as to the *mode in which it has proceeded from God*, rather than *the aspect which it wears to men*. It is, nevertheless, the latter consideration, not the former, which supplies us with the most important, because the simplest and the most practical view of Inspiration. For the point which it most concerns us to determine is not so much "What is Inspiration, as to mode or manner," as "With what authority does it invest the truth revealed, and what moral obligation does that truth, in consequence, lay upon us?" In other words, "What has an inspired record that any other truthful record has not?"

At first view the statement may seem plausible, that words uttered audibly by the voice of God, or so impressed by the Spirit upon the mind of the inspired messenger, that he spoke or wrote, under the influence of the Spirit, certain words, in the selection of which he had no power of choice, should be regarded as clothed with a higher authority than the simple recording of events which had come under his own personal observation, and which required nothing more than the direction of the Spirit to preserve him from error in their narration. In the *mode* of communicating the truth to us, there seems more of the *divine* and less of the *human*—more of the *supernatural* and less of the *ordinary*—in the former case than in the latter; and some, in consequence,





might be disposed to admit the claim to divine sanction and authority in a higher sense in the former instance than they would in the latter.

To reason, however, that truth so revealed must *necessarily* be the *most important* is not in accordance with facts, and is calculated to lead to serious mistakes. For example, an eye-witness of the crucifixion, recording what he saw, would be testifying to an event, the momentous import of which does not admit of calculation; and yet, to his doing so infallibly, would require nothing more than the guiding influence of the Spirit, to insure his giving a true testimony; while an event, in itself of small moment,—such as the casting of lots for the Saviour's robe—might be predicted in

words suggested directly by the Spirit. There is a difference in the mode of inspiration in the two instances; there is no difference in regard to their truthfulness, seeing both have stamped upon them the seal of the Holy Spirit; while the degree of relative importance can only be ascertained from a careful study of the subject matter of the two Revelations.

What, then, constitutes a Revelation from God to man?

Whatever comes to us with divine attestation to its truthfulness is a Revelation from God. There is a speciality in such communications which other records, though true and valuable, do not possess; that speciality is the seal of Heaven to their veracity. The account which Scripture itself gives of the origin of the

Bible is, that "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The inspired writers were men, holy men of God indeed, but still men—men of like passions, like sympathies, like feelings with ourselves,—men who had their individual characteristics, arising from the country and age in which they were born, their social position, and their educational advantages. These men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. How did they speak? In manner, just as honest and truthful men, in the same class and position in life, would bear their testimony. The idiosyncrasy of each individual is manifest in the mode in which he gives his evidence. The *human* is there, just as we should expect it to be in such a person, in connection with

the time, place, and circumstances referred to in the narrative. Where, then, is the evidence of the *divine*? In what way does the Holy Ghost exert his influence upon such individuals? We answer, in guiding and directing their minds in the delivering of their testimony, so that it conveys to us exactly the truth which the Spirit designed it should communicate—nothing more and nothing less.

How, it has been asked, can there be Four Evangelists inspired by the Spirit, and yet testifying to the same events in such different words? The view of inspiration just given allows us to conceive of any number of witnesses thus inspired, each of whom should retain and manifest his peculiarities of thought and expression, and yet each of whom, by means of

the Spirit's influence, should bear an inspired, and, therefore, a faithful testimony.

In delivering that testimony, the witness is not transformed into a machine; he does not make known the Divine Will in "a revealed language sent down from heaven," nor does he express himself in words and phrases different from those he employs in daily life, except when the nature of the message necessitates such diversity. At the same time, the Spirit so directs him that the words he uses present a true statement of the matter, while the sanction of the Spirit is the guarantee of this truthfulness.

Again, the testimony thus authenticated is contained in the *words* employed by the inspired writers. Its meaning is to be gathered from a faithful interpretation

of their words. Seeing that they truly convey to us the mind of the Spirit, the words become as authoritative and as valuable as if they had been literally inspired. A clear perception of this point is essential to the proper understanding and appreciation of God's Word, and would have prevented a great deal of unnecessary and profitless discussion.

The *words*, as they exist in the record, reveal to us the mind of the Spirit, and come with His seal as to their truthfulness. So far as authority or importance—we do not say *mode*—is concerned, could we have a higher Revelation than this? Even in those cases in which each word has been dictated directly by the Spirit, the words, after all, are human words, and their true meaning has to be

ascertained by the correct application of the laws of language and of human thought. We have seen that the words, in the other portions of Scripture, which come to us marked by the idiosyncrasies of the various writers, have to be interpreted in the same way, and, as infallibly, convey to us the mind of the Spirit. So far, then, as authority and truthfulness are concerned, they are *God's words* to us; and thus it follows that, in the sense of infallibly revealing the Divine Will, the *words* of Scripture, in whatever way uttered, have an authority as great as if they had been *verbally inspired*.

Let us look to what the denial of this must necessarily lead. If the words of Scripture correctly interpreted do not convey to us the mind of the Spirit, how is

that mind to be ascertained? Are we to select some portions of Scripture as inspired, and to reject other portions as presenting the merely human element? Then, we ask, on what principle is this selection to be made? If there be an authoritative guide in this matter, what, and where is it? If no such guide exists,—and we have never yet heard of any—it follows that each one is left to exercise his own judgment, as to what parts of Scripture are inspired and what are not.

The inevitable consequence of all this would be, that soon the inspiration of any portion of Scripture, and ultimately of all Scripture, would resolve itself into a matter of individual opinion. For if one person is at liberty to reject one portion of the Bible, and another is at liberty to



reject any other portion, what part is secure from rejection? Some, indeed, would adduce those passages of Scripture in which it is evident that the words were directly suggested by the Spirit, as certainly inspired. Admitting this, the question still remains to be answered, "How are we to regard the remaining, and by far the larger portion of the Bible?" Is each individual left to decide for himself, by intuitive perception, or taste, or sympathetic feeling, which portions are inspired, and which are not? When different individuals adopt this course, and come to opposite conclusions as to what portions of Scripture are invested with the authority of Inspiration, where shall they find a common ground of *faith* and *action*?

M. Guizot, in his remarks on Inspiration, evidently feels the force of this objection, but altogether fails in his attempt to meet it. The answer which he gives might seem appropriate in the mouth of a Roman Catholic, who can fall back, in a difficulty, on the authority of his Church, and an infallible Pope, but is altogether out of place when uttered by a Protestant, whose religion rests on a rational and common-sense interpretation of the Bible. He thus states and answers the objection:—"Appeal is made to a consideration of a different description. If, it is said, we at the same time admit, on the one side, the inspiration of the sacred books, and, on the other, that this inspiration is not universal and absolute, who shall make

the selection between these two parts? Who mark the limit of the inspiration? Who say which texts, which passages are inspired and which are not? So to divide the Holy Scriptures is to strip them of their supernatural character, to destroy their authenticity, by surrendering them to all the incertitudes, all the disputes of men. A complete and uninterrupted inspiration alone is capable of commanding faith. Never-dying pretension of man's weakness," adds M. Guizot, "created intelligent and free, he purposes to use largely his intelligence and his freedom; at the same time, conscious how feeble his means are, how inadequate to his aspirations, he invokes a guide, a support; and, from the very moment that his hope fixes


upon it, he will have it immutable, infallible."—*Meditations on the Essence of Christianity*, p. 147.

To reply to an obvious, and, what all must admit to be, a reasonable objection, by going out of the way to rebuke man for his intellectual presumption, is alike opposed to intelligent Protestantism and to all the principles of a true philosophy. Such a mode of defence, moreover, receives as little countenance from Scripture as it does from sound reason. It is not in harmony with what the Word of God teaches us respecting itself. That Word challenges inquiry, and demands from all a rational and candid consideration of its contents and its claims. Nor could we, as intelligent and accountable agents, expect less in a Revelation from

the great Author of our being. For, if the Bible be not an infallible and immutable guide, it is no sure and certain guide for us. Our saying this does not, however, imply that we regard the Scriptures as designed to teach men every branch of knowledge. They do not come to us claiming to be an inspired textbook in philosophy and science. We believe, as firmly as M. Guizot, that, while God "has dictated to Moses the laws which regulate the duties of man towards God, and of man towards man, He has left to Newton the discovery of the laws which preside over the universe."

The question which we have to consider is not, "Does the Bible teach Science?" but, "How does it teach morality and religion?" Is it not in

words which, when interpreted according to the principles of a sound exegesis, express the meaning which God intended they should convey? In short, are we to explain and understand the Bible as other works are explained and understood; and when so explained, does it carry with it the sanction of the Divine Spirit? Again, if the *words* have the seal of the Spirit, as to their veracity, they are practically as *valuable* and *authoritative* as they would have been had every word been dictated by the Spirit. From overlooking this important distinction, many have fallen into the serious error of supposing that the Bible cannot be regarded as an infallible guide, except in connection with the Mechanical Theory of Inspiration, which represents



the writers as machines or automata, uttering words in the selection of which they had no power of choice.

Having stated the evidence on which the inspired authority of the Scriptures rests, we are not chargeable with reasoning in a circle when we adduce the Bible as a witness, in regard to the nature of the authority with which it is invested.

Reference has previously been made to the recognition by our Lord of the moral obligation of the Law and the Prophets as inspired records. That no portions of those writings are excepted in this claim of authority affords strong confirmation of the view which we have advanced. In like manner, when Peter says, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," he evidently refers

to the writers of the Old Testament Scriptures, without limiting his reference to *certain portions* of their writings. Paul, alluding to the writings of the same individuals, explicitly declares that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." This statement becomes the more emphatic when contrasted with the studied carefulness with which the same Apostle, in his *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, distinguishes what he wrote with the special sanction of the Spirit, from what he expressed as a matter of personal opinion, and on his own authority. The awful curse pronounced at the close of the Apocalypse on all who should dare to add to the words of that Book, puts before us, with unmistakable clearness, the solemn character and supreme authority



with which the inspiration of the Spirit clothes every Revelation of the Divine Will. The appeal made by our Lord and His Apostles to the Scriptures, as the ultimate authority in all that relates to doctrine and practice, supplies an additional proof of the divine character of those writings. In His conflict with the Evil One, the weapon with which the Saviour foiled the Adversary was the *Inspired Word*. Once and again was Satan rebuked and defeated from the written record. It is important to mark the form of expression employed by our Lord, "It is written!" The reference to Scripture is unaccompanied by any restriction or qualification which might lead to the inference that some portions of the Bible were inspired and authoritative,

and some not. Such an important distinction between different parts of the *Written Word* finds no countenance from the teachings of Christ. The very opposite is taught by Him. To the Jews, He says, "The Scripture cannot be broken,"—the Scripture—evidently designating by that term the whole of the Old Testament writings; the same writings to which He refers when He says, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." Again, when the Apostle Paul tells us, that first among the advantages which the Jew possessed over the Gentile was the possession of the Oracles of God, he speaks of them as if all the writings had the same divine sanction, and were equally

inspired. No careful reader of the New Testament can fail to observe that all the quotations from the Old Testament made by the Apostles proceed on the assumption that the *Law* and the *Prophets* are authoritative throughout, and equally authoritative throughout. The recognizing of this fact does not, however, necessitate the inference that all portions of these inspired writings are equally important, or that the *supernatural* was equally manifested in their production.

The view which we have endeavoured to explain binds us to no such belief; but it does involve the conclusion that the different parts of the Bible are really, truly, infallibly what they profess to be; that the records of history are

true records; that descriptions of individual life and character are true descriptions; that statements of numbers (making due allowance in this, as in the other cases, for errors of transcribers) are reliable statements; that revelations of the divine law, and the divine love, and the divine mercy, are faithful revelations. Thus it follows that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

The historical narratives illustrate the superintending government and providence of God; the lives of good men, with their weaknesses, their trials and their triumphs, manifest His special grace and guidance; the revelations

granted through the prophets show the gradual unfolding of the plan of human redemption, through a Saviour to come ; while the very genealogical registers, in the estimation of some so unimportant, show how the Divine Spirit could overrule the interest taken by the Jewish people in merely temporal affairs, to the careful preservation of the higher spiritual element with which, in God's providential arrangements, they were for a time associated.

## V.

### OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

Some of the objections commonly adduced against whatever lays claim to the authority of Verbal Inspiration have been already referred to. There are others which call for a brief notice.

When, for instance, we find that anything partaking of the character of Verbal Inspiration, is charged with turning the sacred penmen into "human ventriloquists," and "automaton poets," the result being nothing less than to "petrify the whole body of Holy Writ, with all its harmonies and symmetrical gradations;" all

we need to say in reply is, that whatever force such objections may have against the theory of Inspiration which represents the writers as mere *machines*, possessed of no power of choice in the selection of the words they used, they do not at all bear on the view of Inspiration which we have shown is taught in Scripture, and which is in perfect harmony with the manifestation of individual peculiarities.

Again, when we say that, so far as truthfulness and the divine sanction are concerned, the *words* of the Bible have as much weight as they would have had if literally inspired, we are met with the question, "Are all portions of Scripture equally the Word of God?" "Are we to regard an historical event related by

an eye-witness, or a series of names taken from some genealogical register, or the record of the nine and twenty knives brought back from Babylon, as equally inspired, with the audible words that came to Moses from the burning bush, or the ten commandments engraven on tables of stone by the finger of God?"

We have already had occasion to observe that objections of this class are based upon the mistaken notion, that the degree of inspiration is determined by the greater or less predominance of the supernatural in the communication of the truth; whereas inspiration does not admit of degree in the sense which those individuals attach to the word. Inspiration, as we view it, includes nothing



more and nothing less than that the statement of Holy Writ, whatever it amounts to, is true: and that the Holy Spirit is the voucher for its truth. The truth of a trivial matter, and the truth of a most momentous matter, do not differ. If they are both true, the one cannot be more true than the other. Their relative importance depends on their intrinsic nature, seeing that both are equally true. Different degrees of importance in the truths revealed must not be confounded with different degrees of Inspiration. From this it follows that the phrase "Plenary Inspiration," as employed by some writers, is inaccurate, and calculated to mislead. The qualifying adjective *plenary* tends to ob-

scure, rather than throw light upon the subject. It lends countenance to the erroneous notion that there are *different degrees* of Inspiration. All Inspiration is plenary, that is, full and complete, or it is no inspiration at all. We are free to acknowledge great and striking diversities in the mode or process of Inspiration, and also different degrees of importance in the truths revealed; but as to their inspired authority, they are all on a level. All are true, and their Inspiration by the Spirit is the guarantee of their truthfulness. It is this sanction of the Spirit which confers upon the Written Word a dignity and authority possessed by no other record, however faithful and true that record may be.

It is asked further, "Are there then no mistakes in the Bible?" It may seem to some hazardous to answer such a question in the negative. We must, however, so answer it; the view which we have advanced admits of no other reply. If the Bible is inspired, there could have been no mistakes in it at first, and there are none now, save those which have originated from the errors of transcribers in the lapse of ages. The recognition of a special providence preserving the inspired record, as the Word of Life, through successive generations, does not at all interfere with the application to the Bible of the ordinary laws of evidence and criticism. It is a principle of universal application throughout the whole of the divine government—in

nature, in providence, and in grace—that God never does for man by miracle what, in the ordinary course of things, he is able to do for himself. Hence the laws of a sound exegesis are to be applied to the Bible, just as they are to any other book. Nor has it any reason to fear the result of an intelligent and impartial investigation of its claims. The collating of MSS., and the collecting of the various readings which they present, have failed to cast the shadow of doubt on any of the fundamental doctrines revealed in the Word of God.

But it is positively asserted that there do occur in Scripture defects, in grammatical structure and logical accuracy, altogether inconsistent with anything approaching to verbal inspiration. Let us

again quote M. Guizot. "Whoever," he says, "reads without prejudice in the Hebrew and Greek the original text of the Scriptures, whether of the Old or New Testament, meets there, often in the midst of their sublime beauties, I do not say merely faults of style, but of grammar, in violation of those logical and natural rules of language common to all tongues. Are we to infer," continues M. Guizot, "that these faults have the same origin as the doctrines with which they are intermixed, and that they are both divinely inspired? And yet this is what is pretended by fervent and learned men who maintain that all, absolutely all in the Scriptures is divinely inspired—the words as well as the ideas,—all the words used upon all sub-

jects, the material of language as well as the doctrine which lies at its base.”—*Meditations*, p. 145.

We would, first of all, take exception to the fact assumed in these statements. We do not admit the charge of deficiency as true in any sense, save that the writers of the Bible, when simple and uneducated men, wrote as we should expect simple and uneducated men to write, and not as men of culture and refinement. Instead of wishing to ignore this fact, we recognise it as one of great importance. In the second place, we would take exception to the principle which *evidently underlies* the whole of M. Guizot's remarks. This principle is, in substance, that there is nothing which can claim the authority of Verbal Inspi-

ration, save words immediately dictated by the Spirit, and in regard to the uttering of which the inspired writers were mere machines. He argues that their words, as coming directly from the Spirit, ought to be marked by grammatical accuracy and adherence to the logical rules of language. Similar ideas seem to have been entertained during the Purist and Anti-Purist controversy of a bygone age, when there were those who thought it derogatory to the dignity of the Holy Spirit to admit that the inspired penmen of the New Testament could write in other than Attic Greek. We have no sympathy with that theory of Verbal Inspiration which M. Guizot assails. It receives no countenance either from the teachings of Scripture, or from the facts

of the case. Because the Mechanical Theory of Verbal Inspiration is manifestly incorrect, it does not, however, follow that no authority attaches to the *words* of Scripture. We have already shown that what the Bible teaches respecting its inspired writers is not that uneducated men lost all that was distinctive of their individuality, and wrote as if they had been trained in the schools; but that, while all of them spake in a manner befitting their different positions and circumstances in life, the influence of the Spirit so rested upon them that they are preserved from error in the testimony which they bear, and, consequently, their *words*, when correctly interpreted, convey to us the mind of the Spirit. Nor ought it to be over-



looked, that the fact of the inspired penmen expressing themselves in a manner appropriate to their worldly position and circumstances furnishes a strong argument for the *Genuineness of the Scriptures*. It shows the high probability of their having been written by persons living at the time, and in the country stated in the documents, and of the rank in society which is there ascribed to them. Would the inspiration and divine authority of the books of the New Testament have been more manifest, had their style and phraseology been those of the purest Attic, instead of the Alexandrian type of the Hellenistic Greek?—or if we met with expressions redolent of the schools of philosophy, instead of words of Macedonian and Roman origin, which mark

the later age of the Common Dialect?—or if no Jewish element showed itself in the New Testament writings? What evidence would such compositions supply of having been written in the age of the early Roman Emperors? Would not the probabilities then have been in favour of the supposition, that they were the productions of disciples of the Grecian schools, rather than of the fishermen of Galilee?

As we have, more than once, referred to M. Guizot's views on Inspiration, it may not be out of place to notice further the serious mistake into which he has been led by his son, in regard to faults in grammar and language in manuscript copies of the Scriptures. "These faults," he says, "become more numerous and

grosser the greater the antiquity of the MS. in which we find them, and the purer the Jewish origin of the writer.”—*Note*, p. 304. Not only is this statement incorrect as to fact, it is also self-destructive as to the principle which it involves. Just as we expect the stream to be purer the nearer we get to the fountain, so critics have long ago recognised the almost self-evident truth, that the nearer we get to the original copy the less likely are the MSS. to be disfigured by the errors of transcribers, and, consequently, that the readings of such MSS. are much more valuable than those of later date. M. Guizot also fails to inform us how recent MSS. came to be more free from faults of style and grammar than older ones, or how, if

it were so, such a fact could be harmonized with any theory of Inspiration whatever?

Again, we are reminded that the writers of the New Testament do not seem to attach much importance to minute verbal accuracy, in their quotations from the Old Testament; and that the accounts of the same occurrence given by different Evangelists are often very far from being verbally identical; and, it is asked, is not this opposed to anything like verbal inspiration? This difficulty we have already met by anticipation, when we showed that the influence of the Spirit guarantees the *truthfulness* of the accounts, not their *identity of expression*. The different narratives presenting the same event from different

points of vision, furnish us, so to speak, with a stereoscopic view of it, each account being true so far as it goes.

It is asked further, does not Scripture stand in opposition to science? In answering this objection, we are wishful to evade no difficulty which fairly, and of necessity, attaches itself to the view of Inspiration which has been advanced in these pages. It is most important, however, to bear in mind that the Bible, though it is not opposed to science, does not profess to teach science. Its descriptions of natural phenomena are expressed in the *language of appearance*, and not in the phraseology of scientific men. The use of such phraseology would have necessitated a miraculous anticipation of future discovery, and, at the same

time, a miraculous influence on the minds of those to whom it was communicated, to make the revelation intelligible. In other words, two exertions of miraculous power to accomplish that which is more efficiently, because more simply, secured without them, by the preserving, through the influence of the Spirit, of the inspired writers from error, while they employed the forms of speech in use at the time when they lived and wrote. The *phenomenal* mode of expression is, within its proper limits, as correct as the *scientific*. It does what it professes to do, describes things as they appear to us, not as they present themselves to the eye of science. There are many things in regard to which it would be as inappropriate and out of place to speak in the language of exact

science, in the present day, notwithstanding the advancement of knowledge of which we hear so much, as it would have been in an earlier and less cultivated age. The writings of the late Archbishop Whately furnish us with a suitable illustration. In his remarks "On the Supposed Dangers of a Little Learning," referring to the *Westminster Review*, he thus handles the sceptic's objection:—

"The reviewer would speak of going in a straightforward line from this place to that, and being there before 'sunset;' but this phrase, though common, is scientifically untrue, like the well-known Scripture fact of 'the sun standing still,' &c.; yet," he adds, "would the reviewer speak of going 'in a geodesic line' from this place to that, and being there 'before

that portion of the earth was withdrawn from the sun's rays?" "The illustration requires no comment; the world, even in this age of progress, would not submit to such scientific pedantry.

Sometimes the objection is put in a stronger form; it is asked, "Can you reconcile belief in an infallible record with statements contradictory to the ascertained truths of science?" We must confess that we are not aware of any reconciling principle in such a case. There is, however, a preliminary inquiry to be settled: "Do such contradictions exist?" It may seem to some a bold statement—but it is that to which our investigations lead us—to say that we do not believe that any contradiction has been proved between the statements of



Scripture, properly explained, and the facts of science, accurately stated. Let it not be overlooked that we say *facts*, not *theories*. While prepared to accept all the former, we would venture to demur to not a few of the latter; and, in doing so, we should be but following the example of scientific men themselves; for how often, and with what energy, have they laboured to refute and overturn the theories of one another! The facts of science, all will allow, change not. Who would dare to claim the same unchangeableness for the views which, at different times, have been advocated by men of science? For instance, what varied theories have there been respecting light and heat!—and who can tell how many more there may yet be! Even

what have long been received as ascertained facts in science may come to be modified and corrected by succeeding experiments and observations. For about a hundred years the scientific world fixed the earth's distance from the sun at ninety-five millions of miles. Now we read that, from the most recent observations, the distance is estimated by some at ninety-one millions of miles; being only a difference of *four millions* of miles! We refer to this to show that the absolute exactness, so frequently claimed for what are called the facts of science, does not in all cases belong to them. The same remark may be made in regard to calculations of historical time. We find nearly as great a diversity in the dates assigned by learned

men to the erection of the pyramids of Egypt, as in regard to the number of the Israelites who came out of that land in the Exodus.

But it is further asked, "What ground is there for believing in the inspired character of Jewish records and dry genealogies, which seem encrusted with the mould of ages long gone by? Is not modern history quite as interesting and much more instructive than ancient Jewish history? And, if so, why should the latter be inspired of God, and not the former? Why should Jewish Chronicles be regarded as inspired any more than Macaulay's History of our own land?" The answer to this objection is, that the history of the Jewish nation is marked by a speciality which belongs

to the history of no other people. From the days of Abraham that history is in close connection with the preservation of the knowledge of the true God on the earth, and with a series of revelations of the Divine love and mercy to men through a great Deliverer yet to come. Viewed in this light, the history of the Jewish people, like their political and ecclesiastical government, stands alone—the history of the people whom God set apart for Himself. Moreover, in addition to its being thus closely associated with the revelation of God's law and of God's mercy to men, the Jewish history is frequently accompanied by inspired comments, which help us to a fuller understanding of the principles of God's providential government of our world. To

a certain extent these records furnish us with a key to the interpretation of the history of all nations, and teach lessons which may be studied with advantage throughout all ages.

From the consideration of the whole subject we arrive at the following conclusions:—That the Bible is an inspired book; that the sanction of the Spirit is the guarantee of its truthfulness; that the inspiration of the writers by the Spirit, while ensuring the accuracy of their communications, did not interfere with their individual peculiarities; that as the words employed under the influence of inspiration accurately convey to us the meaning which the Spirit intended they should communicate—each portion being true for what it professes to be, whether

points of doctrine, or facts in history, or predictions of future events—they are, so far as truthfulness and moral obligation are concerned, as authoritative as if verbally dictated by the Spirit, and are to be explained and enforced accordingly; that, because of the authority flowing from its inspiration, the Bible, not in special portions merely, but in its entirety, is a *Revelation from God to Man*, and supplies all the divine instruction, and all the spiritual aid which, as an intelligent and moral being who has fallen from his original state of purity, he needs to restore him to holiness of character in this life, and to prepare him for endless felicity in the life that is to come.

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